

The REFORMED JOURNAL

VOLUME III — No. 4

A Periodical of Reformed Comment and Opinion

APRIL, 1953

About Foxes and Gadflies

By JAMES DAANE

I take this opportunity to reflect on some of the comments made on my article *Two Little Foxes* (Jan. issue), particularly on those of Rev. E. Zetterholm of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church of Seattle, Washington, which appeared in the last issue of the *Journal* under the caption *Foxes or Gadflies?* I am grateful for the comments, for even the unfavorable ones point up that the issues involved are not imaginary.

As the reader may recall, the first little fox is: "as the college goes, so goes the Church," a proposition round which have grown a constellation of such ideas as: the college is the heart and life-center of the Church, a professorship in the college is the most strategic position in the Church. I regard this slogan with its drawn implications as a fox threatening the Reformed conceptions of the Means of Grace and of the Nature of the Church.

According to Rev. Zetterholm, this creature is not a fox at all, but a gadfly. About the gadfly later. He gives three reasons why it is not a fox. First, he claims that "as the college goes, so goes the Church, is true because the Church does not exist in a vacuum." I indeed admit that the Church does not exist in a vacuum, but I must urge that neither a college nor anything else in the Church's environment constitutes the heart and life-center of the Church. The life-center of the Church is in Christ; Christ himself in his Word and Spirit is the life of the Church. This fact is constitutive of the very nature of the Church. *As such*, the Church is the bearer of eternal life, *as such* the Church is the Universal Church so unlimited to any time or place that nothing

that happens in time or space, not even the gates of hell, can prevail over the Church and destroy her life.

Second, Rev. Zetterholm asks, "Can it be that Dr. Daane has forgotten that these Means of Grace still have fallible human administrators? . . . If we were not convinced that the effectiveness of the ministry was directly proportional to the extent that human fallibility is removed by education and training, certainly the Church would not be spending money and time in the preparation of her ministers." Here Rev. Zetterholm argues that the effectiveness of the Means of Grace is "directly proportional" to the degree in which a school is successful in eliminating fallibility from the ministers of the Means of Grace. Is the power of the Word and Sacraments thus dependent on a school? Surely not! Moreover, the claim that the effectiveness of the Means of Grace is contingent upon the greater or lesser fallibility of their administrators is a

strictly mistaken position long ago exploded by St. Augustine in the Donatist controversy. Every Church that accepts the Baptism administered by another Church, even though it believes that Church to be theologically in error, admits the rightness of St. Augustine on this matter. No such Church, therefore, can be said to spend its time and monies on educational institutions to remove the fallibility of her ministers *in order to make the Means of Grace effective*. And when we achieve a fully developed Calvinistic Philosophy of Education, it will not thus relate schools to churches and education to the Means of Grace.

Rev. Zetterholm's third reason appeals to the historical fact that bad theology in the schools brings bad theology into the Churches. I presume that no responsible person would deny this, and I further presume that many who use the slogan "as the school goes, so goes the Church" mean nothing more

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than that. Regarding such usage, the only criticism that could normally be made is that it is a loose expression for saying what is actually meant. And if this were the whole matter, I would not bother to criticize it. But it is not the whole matter. The untenable idea contained in the slogan is taking root and is producing as its fruit a whole complex of ideas which are theologically invalid, but which nonetheless are put forward as valid because of the alleged validity of the slogan from which they stem. And when the invalidity of the slogan becomes the guarantee of the validity of its implications, it is then time to become critical of the slogan.

To what lengths the supporters of this slogan sometimes go! To support its theological content, appeal is made to history! Such procedure may convince the unwary, but someone will sometime arise and ask whether we now derive our theology, and our theological conception of the nature of the Church from history! And by so doing he will point to the necessity of again studying the Bible!

Is it true that history supports this slogan? Can it be proved from history that a Church-controlled school is a school that controls the Church? Where it is done, a sleight-of-hand trick has been effectively performed! And if this slogan could legitimately be supported by history, then, as Rev. I. Van Dellen has reminded us in *De Wachter*, history would provide a very powerful argument against a Church-owned school. Should a Church own a college, if a college could actually control the Church?

THE question is simply, Which controls which? The answer is equally simple. A Church-controlled school is not a school that controls and determines the Church's future. The reverse is so true that, if and when strange theological fires burn on the academic altars of a Church-owned school, or if the fires go out completely, the Church alone must assume the responsibility. For as the Church goes, so goes the Church-controlled school!

When this position is reversed and its theological content is then taken seriously, the very nature of the Church is imperilled. This is apparent from Rev. Zetterholm's own support of the slogan. He denies that the teaching of Jesus that the gates of hell cannot prevail against the Church can be applied

to a particular denomination. If he were right, there would be an *essential* feature of the Church which is not an essential feature of the Churches. But all true churches possess all the essential features of the Church of Christ. Consequently, it is the *very nature* of the Christian Reformed Church — and of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church, too — that the gates of hell cannot prevail against her. This does not involve, as Rev. Zetterholm mistakenly supposes, that his church or mine are made "co-extensive" with the whole Church of Christ, nor does the application of these words of Jesus to our respective churches make one guilty of "ecclesiastical egotism." These words of Jesus are indeed applicable, for the reason that every true church is a historical concretion and manifestation of that universal Church which is the Body of Christ.

Rev. Zetterholm's church or mine may indeed come to a point in time where it ceases to exist. But the words of Jesus are nonetheless applicable to his church or mine for the reason that every historical manifestation of the Body of Christ is *more than a mere historical institution* — something which cannot be said of a college. A given church is *more*, for it is a manifestation of the Universal Church *whose very nature is that it is not limited to a certain time or place*. Its possible temporal end (limit), therefore, does not annul the fact that it was a manifestation of the Universal Church, and consequently does not exclude the fact that the gates of hell could not prevail against her. This unique nature of the churches constitutes one of the *decisive differences between the churches as historical institutions and every other kind of historical institution*. It is this decisive and distinctive nature of both the Church and the Churches which is progressively hidden from view by a growing complex of ideas and arguments based on the assumed validity of the proposition that "as the school goes, so goes the church." Risking repetition, I repeat that this slogan threatens nothing less than the very nature of the Christian Church.

I indeed do not want to deny the value of good schools, nor that of an educated ministry. Nor do I want to be blind to the consequences when they are not good. But neither do I want to enhance their value by a stripping

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EDITORIAL BOARD

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Rev. George Stob, Dr. Henry Stob,
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Published each month by the
Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

Subscription price: \$2.00 per year

Entered as Second Class Matter at the Post
office at Grand Rapids, Mich.

Address all subscriptions and communica
tions to:

THE REFORMED JOURNAL
255 Jefferson Avenue, S. E.
Grand Rapids 3, Mich.

and transfer of the Church's peculiar
glory.

I must therefore insist that this is a real fox. It is imaginary only to the imagination. But I must add, it is not a gadfly. Rev. Zetterholm has somehow come to believe that this slogan is a gadfly let loose to sting the leadership of the Christian Reformed Church into an awareness of its responsibility. He even "prays" that in the providence of God it will have this effect. He feels that our leadership has not been alive to its task of providing a "thoroughly integrated Calvinistic Philosophy of Education." Why he regards this as our special need, I do not know, though I may assure him that our leadership is working at this very thing. But I do know that when such a philosophy of education is achieved it will not be blind to the error of this slogan, nor to its already drawn and announced implications that the life-center of the Church is in a school and that a college professorship is the most strategic position in the Church.

A gadfly's services are valuable only in an abnormal situation; in a normal situation it is regarded as a pest to be gotten rid of. If then it is indeed a gadfly which should be given the Flit when normalcy returns, how can it be

regarded as a slogan whose theological content is sound and always valid?

* * *

Now that second little fox. I am glad that Rev. Zetterholm has recognized the creature which I have called fox. In this he has done better than some of my other critics. He has correctly seen that my position is not that there are no spiritual exercises like prayer and Bible reading which can be spiritually helpful and are sometimes loosely called means of grace. Nor does he attribute to me that I see little value in such spiritual exercises. On the contrary, he has correctly understood that what I call a fox is the position which claims that the *primary* source of spiritual power and revival is to be found in individual and group Bible study rather than in the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments.

Rev. Zetterholm understands why I am wary of such a position, and he will also understand why I am wary of a position which asks, How much good would the Church's preaching accomplish if the hearers did not privately study their Bibles? He will understand why I am wary of a "private" means of grace which turns out to be group Bible study, and one that is given to the *Church*. He will understand why I am wary of a position that asserts that sacred song, for example, is a

private means of grace, but then also asserts that it is an *indispensable* means of grace given by God to the *Church*. He will also understand why I am wary of a position which admits that in Reformed theology the Means of Grace have a "fixed meaning" but then immediately proceeds to teach that there are many more — the number seems to make little difference, for even God's providences are suggested to be such means — and that these are so indispensable that the effectiveness of the official Means of Grace are dependent upon them. For it is plain that what is here at issue is not a mere matter of a looser usage of the term Means of Grace, but an emptying of their distinctive indispensability and effectiveness by the claim that there are other means of grace so effective and indispensable that the Means of Grace cannot be effective without them.

Rev. Zetterholm is quite properly unwilling to grant this superiority to the loosely called means of grace. Yet he is willing to make the latter equal to, and as equally indispensable as the Means of Grace. He writes, "It is no more correct to say that a revival of spiritual power can come only through the official proclamation of the church, than it is to say that it can come only through individual and group Bible study." With this of course I do not agree. Because I do not, Rev. Zetterholm suggests that I see an "antithesis" between

the Means of Grace and individual and group Bible study. The truth is that I see no antithesis, but I do see a difference. What difference? Briefly, this difference: First, the two traditional Means of Grace have been *instituted* by God. Accordingly, the Heidelberg Catechism teaches that faith is wrought in the human heart by the preaching of the gospel and confirmed by the administration of the sacraments. Secondly, the Catechism also teaches that this working and strengthening of faith is accomplished through these two Means of Grace *by an activity of the Spirit of God*. In the two divinely appointed Means of Grace, the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments, God himself is at work. This constitutes a basic difference between the Means of Grace and the means of grace loosely so-called. In the latter *man* reads, *man* prays, *man* sings. Therefore, it may be said that if man sings thoughtlessly his singing of hymns will be of no spiritual value, if he prays thoughtlessly his prayer will not be effective. To point this out is not to throw cold water on such devotional exercises nor to write them off as being without value. I would not belittle their significance, but I would point to something of even higher significance, *to the fact that in the Means of Grace God himself is active and that this gracious divine action is as superior to human action as grace is superior to human effort*. Thus I would point to the fact that the Means of Grace possess an indispensability and independent effectiveness that cannot be attributed to what are loosely called means of grace. I heartily agree with Professor Berkhof that it is better not to follow such men as Hodge who included prayer as a Means of Grace. And I would urge in the spirit of that tradition that it is a mistake to follow those who teach that there are also numerous private means of grace which are so indispensable and effective that the effectiveness of the Means of Grace are contingent upon them. And my deepest reason is that no human activity can be equated with the divine activity of the Spirit of God, and no human activity no matter how spiritual and devotional can in a proper sense be called a Means of Grace. Grace is a divine gift, not a human achievement, not even an achievement of the saints. Why then becloud so important a truth by unfixing the fixed meaning of the Means of Grace, and by giving it so broad a meaning as will include any

SONNET TO MARY

That earliest Easter, Mary, did you wonder
To hear the sun victoriously bright
Shatter your window, louder than the thunder
Had pierced the blackness of Good Friday night?

Did you, drugged with darkness, draw about you
The cozy covers of your three-day's grief
And never hear John running off without you?

Or did you hear — and Peter running after?
Had you perhaps such boldness of belief
The room resounded with your gentle laughter

At those who had to prove by human sight
What you already knew about that dawn —
That on the hills the lilies would be white,
And from the tomb the tombstone would be gone?

— ELIZABETH KAMPHUIS VAN KLUYVE

About Foxes and Gadflies — Continued

number of merely human spiritual exercises?

The official proclamation of the Word and the administration of the sacraments enjoy much less respect in our day than they should, and the matter is not helped when we equate, and sometimes even subordinate, the Means of Grace to lesser things. Nothing is gained, but much is lost, by pulling the higher down to the level of the lower.

IT was pointed out above that a church is more than a mere historical institution because it is a manifestation of the Body of Christ. Here it must be pointed out that the proclamation of the gospel is more than a human activity. To be sure men preach and administer the sacraments, but both are *more* than a human activity. The minister is the agency, the voice through which Christ proclaims his Word. Christ himself through his Spirit works and confirms faith by proclamation and sacraments. *Therefore proclamation, because it involves a divine activity, is more than Bible reading and study, and therefore the effectiveness of the Church's proclamation is not "directly proportional" to the human fallibility of the preacher.*

All this does not mean that the Spirit of God is never active when a man prays or sings or reads his Bible. To say that the Spirit is only operative in the official Means of Grace, would be to say what is contrary to fact. The Spirit is not thus imprisoned in the organized Church. But the point is rather that in the Means of Grace the Spirit is *always* active, even when there is no human response at all. This is especially evident in the case of infant Baptism. But the Spirit is not *always* active when I pray, sing, or read the Bible. A person may do these things thoughtlessly so that they are meaningless routine exercises. When this happens the Spirit is not active, and the *meaningless* spiritual exercise is not a *means* of grace. When these things are properly done, the Spirit is active, and they are *so done because the Spirit is active*. Thus the spiritual exercises that are loosely called means of grace, are *Spirit-induced human responses to God*. Thus they are human responses induced by the Spirit and elicited by the grace of God within man. In distinction from this, the Means of Grace point to a *coming* of

the Spirit and of the grace of God to man, a *divine* work upon man; they point in the first instance to God's action upon man, not to man's reaction to God. It is therefore necessary to maintain a *clear-cut distinction* between the Means of Grace and what are means of grace loosely so called, — as necessary as to maintain a clear-cut distinction between God's work upon and in man, and man's response to God, between God's action and man's reaction.

This fox may be spotlighted by one or two questions. What revival in the history of the Church was the result of Bible study rather than preaching? Again, how can Bible reading and study, highly valuable and blessed by God as it indisputably is, be an *indispensable* Means of Grace in view of the fact that the Church for centuries did not possess it, since it was factually impossible for individual church members to own or read a Bible? The excessive and incautious claims that constitute this fox are broken by the facts of history.

Unless I am blindly mistaken — so blind that I see foxes in my imagination and think them real — what I have written on this subject is nothing but an expression of a long-accepted Reformed position. If this be Romanism I am wide open to correction, but let the correction be biblical, theological argumentation which embraces the subject at its center, not merely peripheral religious remarks that stand far from the center of the issue.

* * *

ALTHOUGH Rev. Zetterholm sees no second fox, he claims to see another gadfly. He has somehow come upon the idea that the Christian Reformed Church is in special need of revival and that the above discussed Bible study claims are protests of the laymen of our Church let loose with the hope that they will sting our ministry into better sermonizing. He writes, "Now if we grant what amounts to the major premise, that the church is in need of spiritual awakening . . . then it would seem all too plain that somewhere there is something amiss with the official proclamation of God's Word. Somehow it is not bearing that fruit which we might reasonably expect of it in the conversion of sinners and the edification of the saints. Somehow it is evident that the people seem to have an almost intuitive sense of lack, of a need

which is not being met and which hope will be met by their individual and group study." Now that is a lot "somehowing." But Rev. Zetterholm does suggest how all this could "somehow" happen. He wonders whether "if as a matter of fact the Means of Grace has not been thought to be the preaching of the Catechism rather than the preaching of the Word." What he means by this he makes plain by quoting from an article I wrote four years ago in *The Banner* in which I pleaded for a type of Catechism sermon which is based on the text of the Catechism itself. He observes that "when it comes to the point where preaching the Catechism means to exegete and homilize the words of Ursinus, . . . then preaching ceases to be the solemn proclamation of the Word of God . . ." he adds, "if it has only been Dr. Daane's version of 'Catechism Preaching' has been going on in the Christian Reformed Church, then it may well be that revival of scriptural power will not come, cannot, come by means of it, and can come only by means of individual group Bible study. One may sincerely wonder whether the desire for private and group Bible study has not been fostered by a healthy curiosity to know whether what the Catechism and our preachers have said is also by some remote possibility contained in the Word of God." Now these are both strange and strange words.

May I state first of all that the Bible study claims, and these claims about the means of grace in the wide, lay sense are not a laymen's protest, therefore not a laymen's gadfly to sting the Christian Reformed ministry. They have on the contrary been put forward by one who is himself a clergyman. Moreover, Rev. Zetterholm should honor me by calling the kind of Catechism sermon for which I pleaded "Daane's version." It has been around a lot longer than I have, both in Europe and in America. I personally found it interesting to observe that seven months in Amsterdam I have to hear a Catechism sermon which does not follow the method Rev. Zetterholm has associated with my name.

I would also register the observation that there is a kind of individualism which rings through Rev. Zetterholm's evaluation of the Heidelberg Catechism which is hardly compatible with the Reformed thinking about Creeds. His statement, "But when it comes to the point where preaching the Catechism means to exegete and homilize"

ords of Ursinus . . . then such preaching ceases to be the solemn proclamation of the Word of God . . .," can hardly be called a Reformed comment. Reformed thought insists that when a creed has been officially adopted by Reformed Churches and is for centuries confessed to be the truth of God, such a creed may not be regarded as being no more than the words of the person who formulated the creed. In precisely that sense the Truth of the Catechism may be said to be the Word of God cannot be defined here. The matter has indeed received a bit of discussion in our churches, but the consensus, I believe, was expressed by Professor Zetterholm some weeks ago in *The Banner* when he stated his disagreement with the position that the preaching of the Catechism is not a preaching of the Word of God. When, in contrast to Catechism preaching, Rev. Zetterholm asserts, "Not until our preaching is founded on an exhaustive analysis and synthesis of Scripture are we able to say that we are proclaiming the Word of God," an unacceptable religious individualism is evident. Aside from the inference that the Catechism is not the product of such study, the question arises as to when the individual would be ready to preach if he had first to achieve this task by himself alone. Rev.

Zetterholm's estimation of private Bible study assumes to itself a value it cannot possibly possess, and it does so at the expense of the communal mind and study of the Church. Here is an emphasis upon Bible study which is not biblical. Where individual Bible study is so defined that a minister *cannot begin* to preach the Word of God *until after* he has made "an exhaustive analysis and synthesis of Scripture," such study has been misunderstood. And when he suggests that Reformed laymen can engage in such study because moved by a "healthy curiosity" to see whether what the Catechism and its preachers have said is also by some "remote possibility" contained in the Word of God, his conception of Bible study betrays an individualistic and anti-creedal character. And the same estimate must be made of the thought of those who contend that when the gospel is proclaimed by the Church, the hearer is under no obligation to believe what he hears until he first substantiates what he has heard by individual Bible study. Does not the Bible itself teach that when the Word is preached, the convicting power of the Spirit attends it? If Word and Spirit go together, is the Word when preached by the Church through minister or apostle so devoid of authority that it need not be believed until the

hearer has first passed his individual judgment over it on the basis of his individual Bible study? Such a conception of the relationship between gospel proclamation and individual Bible study strips the Church and its proclamation of all authority. This is the autonomous man in religious garb. This kind of religious individualism, so destructive of all church authority, is exceedingly common in our day, but it is also exceedingly unbiblical, even when advocated in the name of Bible study.

No, Rev. Zetterholm, such a conception of Bible study is not generally held by Christian Reformed people. Where it exists and is promoted it must be designated a fox, for a fox it is. Nor is it true that when our people hear the Catechism itself expounded from the pulpit that they are so displeased with their minister and his sermon that they turn to the Bible, because they suspect that there is but a "remote possibility" that what was said from the pulpit is contained in the Word of God. The improper claims put out in the interest of furthering Bible study are not gadflies let loose by irate laymen hopeful that their ministers will get properly stung. Those foxes are foxes all right, and they are apparently still running loose. But they are on the ground, not in the air, nor on the ceiling.

Does It Work?

by HARRY R. BOER

LAST summer a group of us were discussing the merits of the Minority Report on the place of Education in Missions. In the course of the conversation a minister made a rather significant remark. "I like the general and of the minority report," he said, "but what I'd like to know is — does it work?" Some might call this a rather American question, breathing an unbecoming spirit of utilitarianism. That was not my reaction. I feel the question is an eminently fair one. After all, the Church has been doing mission work for more than nineteen hundred years now, and it would seem that history ought to shed some light on the problem our Church is currently facing. I should like in this article to bring to the attention of *Journal* readers some historical data that ought to be of interest in the present discussion. But before doing so allow me briefly to

orient the reader to the issue.

In 1950 the synod of the Christian Reformed Church appointed a committee of seven to "formulate the principles of indigenous mission work." The concrete occasion for the calling into being of this committee was a generally felt dissatisfaction with the manner in which our Indian mission work was being conducted. In 1952 the committee reported its findings to synod. Its reports on Evangelism and Medical work were unanimous and were adopted by synod. On the question of Education a majority and a minority report were presented. The majority took the position that since the Church of the New Testament is in a state of maturity she has the right to determine by which methods she may perform her missionary task and is therefore not limited to the methods directly given in Scripture. This led the majority to lay down as a

basic principle "the general thought that it is proper for the Church in her work to use any means which is congenial to the Gospel." Only those methods that "seek to make converts by the use of the sword; by bribing people with material gifts, by intrigue, by compromising the real meaning of the Gospel and such means" are condemned. In short, whatever means are honest, fair, open and above board may be used to proclaim the Gospel.

The minority presented a wholly different report. It took the position that, since the work of missions is the official task of the instituted Church, it is bound in its methods by those activities that are proper to the organized Church. Emergencies and unusual circumstances may make it necessary for the Church to undertake temporarily activities that do not properly belong to her, but, said the committee, "We are concerned

Does It Work? — Continued

in this report with continuing norms for the Church's activity on the mission field which are determinable from the nature and functions which the Scriptures ascribe to her." It therefore argued against the majority that "if education is considered a legitimate agency for the Church to avail herself of in evangelism, there is no reason why other means should not be similarly adopted. The development of medical work beyond its scripturally warranted scope, rural reconstruction, socio-economic counselling and projects, can all then be urged upon the Church as legitimate activities in which the Church 'may' engage equally with that of education." The minority then pleaded that synod adopt the view that "Education is properly a parental responsibility. The school is the extension of the home . . . The function of education on the mission field is fundamentally no other than it is at home." Therefore the real basis of education that is given on the mission field must be the desire of Christian parents that their children receive a Christian education and, further, "their willingness to shoulder the maximum burden of responsibility, support, and control of which they are capable." (For Majority and Minority Reports see Acts of Synod, 1952, pp. 207-225). This is, in very brief summary, the issue on which the Synod of 1953 will have to express itself. Do the past and present missionary endeavors of the Church shed any light on the question? Can it be shown, for instance, that the position of the minority "works"?

* * *

THERE can be little doubt that the point of view represented by the majority has been a large and influential factor in the Protestant missionary expansion dating from around 1800. Our current expenditure of about \$350,000 annually to reach effectively a small fraction of fifteen to twenty thousand Indians through some seventy-five workers and several substantial institutions may be a very extreme expression (disavowed also by the majority) of a long dominant method, but it is in line with what has been done on many other fields. Today, however, the missionary world is seriously questioning the approach that has so long been followed in the past. Long standing doubts about the wisdom of concentrat-

ing effort on extensive institutional mission work were brought to a head in the tragic debacle in China. Universities, colleges, high schools, lower schools, hospitals, medical schools, printing establishments, YMCA's, all financed in large measure by mission funds, fell into the hands of the Church's arch-enemy, the Communists. One bishop pathetically reflected the universal disappointment and the misplaced emphasis that characterized past effort. We had thought, he said, that, whatever would happen, we could count on the institutions to carry on the work and support the Christianity that had been planted. But now they have all fallen into the hands of the Communists, and the only hope for Christianity in China is that little Church to which we paid such inadequate attention.

The doubts and question that had existed before were not occasioned by fears that institutional enterprises would be lost to hostile governments. Rather, they arose from the fact that these institutions tended to lose their Christian character, and from the mounting realization that they were not contributing nearly as largely as had been expected to bringing into being men and women who stood committed to Christ by open confession and changed walk of life. The Church seldom seemed to grow in proportion to effort devoted to institutional undertakings. In China defective mission principles and a catastrophe in its missionary history have combined to create a profound disillusionment which has occasioned a rethinking of strategy for every area where the Church is missionarily active. In this rethinking we are, fortunately, not without fruitful examples pointing to a more effective prosecution of the missionary enterprise.

Paul and the Churches in Asia Minor and in Greece

THE figure of St. Paul has been predominantly associated in the mind of the Church with theological questions. The centrality of Christ, law and grace, predestination, Christian liberty, the Church in her relation to the world, the organization of the Church — these are the doctrines and questions associated with the name of St. Paul. Seldom has the Church given adequate attention to the fact that Paul was first and foremost a *missionary* and

an *organizer of newly founded churches*. When we study Paul the *missionary* we shall not only come to a richer appreciation of Paul the theologian, but we will also find that he is the great contemporary and sympathetic fellow-worker of every missionary in every age. Above all we will find that he is the great critic and the wholesome corrector of the Church in her missionary ways.

A greater disparity than that which exists between the missionary methods of St. Paul, and the methods that have been central during the past century and a half is hardly conceivable. One would also have to look long and hard to discover a greater disparity than that which exists between the results obtained by St. Paul and those obtained by the methods to which we of the Western Church have so long been accustomed. "In a little more than ten years," writes Roland Allen, "St. Paul established the Church in four provinces of the Empire, Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia and Asia. Before A.D. 40 there were no Churches in these provinces; in A.D. 57 St. Paul could speak as if his work there was done, and could plan extensive tours into the far West without anxiety lest the Churches which he had founded might perish in his absence for want of his guidance and support."

How did Paul achieve these amazing results? This is perhaps best seen on our missionary day by observing what he did *not* do. Paul did not organize schools or classes for children in order that through these he might "reach the parents." He did not attempt to transplant Jewish culture or a Jewish social pattern for the lives of his converts. He did not raise large funds in Jerusalem or in Judea to support the churches he founded. He did not send Jerusalem supported men to be the teachers and pastors of the churches. He did not keep the churches in dependence upon himself or his fellow-workers. Paul did not, in other words, do many of the things that we of the West have been doing in establishing the Church in foreign parts.

What Paul did was to proclaim the Gospel to the community as a whole, baptize upon confession of faith, instruct intensively while he was in residence, and appoint office-bearers to govern the newly founded church. He then left behind him a fully organized, independent, self-supporting congregation. In churches so founded the Word was preached, the sacraments administered, and from them went out a witness

ness to the entire surrounding area resulting in the founding of other churches. This work was done with manifest dependence upon the Holy Spirit and with equally manifest recognition of his presence in the young churches qualifying them for full ecclesiastical responsibility. The impressive results of these labors are known to us. So effective was this ministry that after ten years there was for Paul "no longer room in these parts."

One wonders what kind of a Church would exist in the world today if she had ignored and neutralized Paul's theology as she has his missionary methods. And one also wonders what kind of missionary expansion the Church would have witnessed if she had paid as much attention to Paul's missionary methods as to his theology. But it has happened all too often that when Paul's methods were urged upon the missionary community they all began with one consent to make excuse. It has been said that Paul had a synagogue to begin with in most of the places in which he preached, that he brought the Gospel to a cultured world that could appreciate his deep doctrines, that there was everywhere in the ancient world a religious yearning and an openness for such a message as Paul brought, that he was able to work miracles, that he more than we could delegate responsibility to new converts. In this argumentation it is generally forgotten that the synagogues turned against Paul and that his Jewish antecedents and connections were not an element in his favor in the Greek and Roman world, that his Gospel was, in his own words, foolishness to the Greek and a stumblingblock to the Jew, that the vaunted culture of the ancient world found relatively little expression among the masses, that he resorted to the use of miracles only upon occasion, and that *wherever* the Church of Christ comes into being the Holy Spirit qualifies believers for the acceptance of witnessing and governing responsibility. In general it may be said that the arguments adduced against doing mission work in Paul's way place an overevaluation on the situation obtaining in his time and an underevaluation on the situation in our time. The advance of the Gospel has been easy nowhere, and at no time were the obstacles standing in the way of its advance greater than when the missionary crusade of the Church was launched.

Was only Paul's theology written for the instruction of the Church? Did not

the Lord have an equally clear purpose in mind in delineating so carefully and in so great detail how this unequalled missionary servant performed his labors? Whatever differences in accent or approach may be made necessary by varying times and peoples and places, the *norm* governing Paul's missionary witness should remain unimpaired. *Let the Church be the Church*, also on the mission field, and let her not accept as an equal principle that she "may" also assume the role of an educational institute, agricultural agency, medical center, or socio-economic planning commission. The use of these means as methods of evangelism was not only unknown to Paul, but it is foreign to the whole structure of his missionary conception.

It is not generally known among us that the principles underlying Paul's method have been applied in a number of significant missionary areas, and that on a large scale with astoundingly blessed results. I shall briefly describe three younger churches that show what great things can be accomplished when the principle of native responsibility is effectively applied.

The Karen Church (Burma)

ABOUT 1827 American Baptists began to work among a near primitive people, the Karens, in Burma. Through the conversion and evangelistic labors of a native, Ko Tha Byu, who had been a violent tempered robber and murderer, the Gospel was carried to his people. The continuing witness of a handful of missionaries and the native preacher started what became in time a mass movement to Christianity. Thirty years after the beginning of the witness 12,000 church members were reported. The language was reduced to writing, the Bible translated, Christian literature prepared. Schools were organized to instruct the children of the Christians. These, and also the many churches, were supported by the Karens themselves. In 1914 there were nearly 50,000 church members served by 192 ordained and 541 unordained preachers. The large educational structure was served by 883 teachers. The Karens also undertook mission work among neighboring tribes and grew in power and in influence in their country. Latourette, the well known American historian of missions, reports that the Karens "became more nearly independent of subsidiaries from the outside than almost any other group of Christians in

southern and eastern Asia." At present the Karen Church numbers about 440,000 members.

The Batak Church (Sumatra)

THE Bataks, living in the highlands of Sumatra, were a primitive and aggressive people when the first missionaries made contact with them. In 1834 two American missionaries who tried to establish a witness among them were ambushed, killed and eaten. Not until thirty years later was another effort made to reach the Bataks. In 1861 a German Lutheran mission, soon to come under the leadership of the great Ludwig Ingwer Nommensen, was founded among them. Nommensen is described as "a man of indomitable will, wise, far-seeing, a friend and father of his people." Under this leader the mission went forward. It went forward with great faith, but without money. The economic difficulties before and after the Franco-German war constrained the German government to forbid the export of funds for missionary purposes. Cut off from financial support from home Nommensen and his associates undertook mission work that looked for its support wholly to the native population. The result of this policy, made necessary by the disguised blessing of non-support from home, is, in the words of a leading student of indigenous missions, "one of the greatest independent churches in the world." The Batak Church today numbers a half million members or 40% of the total Batak population. It consists of 300 congregations whose preachers also serve during the week as teachers of the Christian schools. Two large modern hospitals together with a network of sub-hospitals are wholly supported by the Bataks. The schools have for some time been in substantial part subsidized by the government, but in their growth and development they have received little or no support from Europe, have come into being to meet a need felt by the Christian Bataks themselves, and are wholly staffed by Batak men. That is to say, the basis of the educational structure is indigenous and covenantal.

The Church in Korea

WITH so much attention currently centered on Korea it is also gradually becoming known that one of the finest examples of indigenous mission work is to be found in that now hard-

Does It Work? — Continued

pressed country. Mission work in the modern period was begun as recently as 1884, and a very leading part in it was taken by American Presbyterians. Before war disrupted the country the Korean Presbyterian Church alone numbered 480,000 members. Its membership supports hundreds of lower Christian schools and a number of secondary schools. The purpose of these schools is to give a Christian education to children of believers.

How could such an amazing development take place in less than seventy years? The answer lies in no small part in a set of simple mission principles laid down by Dr. John Nevius, a Presbyterian missionary in China, when he was invited by the Presbyterian missionaries in Korea to set forth his mission methods. These were, in brief:

1. Each Christian should remain in his own calling, live and witness for Christ in his own neighborhood, and support himself by his own trade.
2. Church methods and machinery are to be developed only so far as the native church is able to care for and manage them.
3. To set aside qualified men, insofar as means permit, to do evangelistic work in the neighborhood of the church.

4. Natives are to provide their own church buildings which shall be of such style and size as the local church itself can afford to build.

This well-nigh total rejection of missionary paternalism and foreign support has been an untold blessing to the Korean Church. This rejection was possible because of the acceptance of another principle — the principle of the maturity and responsibility of the New Testament Church in which dwells the Holy Spirit of power. Where this principle is accepted we shall not invert the order of growth and development by bringing into being all manner of institutional effort which is properly the *fruit*, not the *cause*, of the founding of the Church.

* * *

IT would not be difficult to adduce other examples of large missionary endeavor in which the direct preaching of the Gospel and the recognition of the responsibility of the converts brought into being flourishing churches and equally flourishing Christian activities that served to strengthen the foundations and expand the witness of the Church. I could allude to missionary enterprises in the islands of Oceania, and to our own work and that of others in Africa. But these three must suffice.

In these examples the relationships between Church and School are not equally clear or equally desirable. We have ourselves not fully realized the norm for the relationship between Church and School to which we subscribe. But in the examples that were mentioned the following factors stand out and they are of the greatest importance in the present discussion:

1. The direct preaching of the Gospel was the means by which the Church was founded.
2. Immediate and large responsibility was given to the converts and to their Churches.
3. The educational activity arose out of the believing community and served the believing community.
4. The support of Church and Kingdom work devolved upon the native converts.

This is all quite in line with the missionary methods followed by St. Paul. It is the direction, I think, in which we should move as we try further to lay down the scriptural norms that must govern our missionary practice. The standard for our action is not history, but Scripture. But history can be a great encouragement in holding the scriptural standard before us and in refusing to be deflected from it. And history shows that mission methods congenial to the Reformed conception of the Church can and do work.

For Decency and Good Order

by GEORGE STOE

THE 1952 Synod of the Christian Reformed Church adopted an "abbreviated and simplified set of rules for Synodical procedure." They are a streamlining of a more extensive and detailed set of rules adopted in 1934. This had been asked for by the officers of the Synod of 1950, who judged that the rules adopted in 1934 were "in many instances too technical and too detailed, unsuited to a deliberative assembly, such as our Synod" (*Acts* 1950, p. 60, Art. 132).

It is good to get rid of an *excess* of rules. We shouldn't want to get tied up by unnecessary "red tape." Whether the newly abbreviated and simplified

set of rules has delivered us from an excess of *technicalities* without sacrificing *principles* of procedure important to the life of the Church, remains yet to be seen. If it has we shall be thankful to have gained much and lost nothing.

There is one instance in the new set of rules, however, which gives cause for concern. Interestingly, the concern is not occasioned by what has been taken out but by what has been put in. In this "abbreviated and simplified set of rules" there has crept in a rather surprising amplification and complication that bodes no good, because it ignores the principle of communion basic to the life of the Church, is inconsistent

with the Scriptural provisions for Church government, and opens the door for the intrusion of the foreign element of pressure into the Church's deliberations.

This sounds like a strong judgment. And you will be asking: "Where is that culprit addition to our rules?" You'll find it under Section V-D of the new set of rules. There, under "Matters Legally Before Synod," there is this specification: "Overtures or communications, which have failed to gain the endorsement of Classis, but which the Consistory or individual sponsoring the same desires to submit for Synod consideration. Likewise overtures, or

communications from individual members, regarding matters of common interest as referred to in Article 30, Church Order" (*Acts* 1952, pp. 491, 502, my italics — GS)

There is nothing wrong with the first part of the rule just quoted. It was part of the old rules, too (cf. Schaver, *Unity of the Churches*, Vol. II, p. 298). This is the last part, which I have italicized, which is the incriminated intrusion. And cloaked as it is — but improperly — in the official vesture of Article 30 of the Church Order, it is like the Trojan horse come to raise a disordering influence within the city. Now to the proof.

"For the Advantage . . . Of Other Members"

THE addition to the rules above quoted ignores the principle of communion which is basic to the life of the Church.

It is a very wonderful thing that as Christians we stand not alone and to ourselves but as members of a body of which Christ is the Head. We are members," to be sure, each having his own individuality — so that there is no monotonous sameness in the body of Christ. But we are members in the life of a body. We do not, therefore, live as bare individuals. Indeed, we must not. Our life is a common life which we share with others who are members with us in the body of Christ. We are a *communion* of saints — and that is a basic fact which must condition all our living and thinking even as individuals (Cf. I Corinthians 12).

And as Paul observes, there is no member of the body who can say to the other members of the body, "I have no need of thee." To the contrary, he notes that even as God bestowed abundant care upon the members of the body, so "the members should have the same care one for another" (I Cor. 12:5, and verses preceding). We have need of each other in our acting and in our thinking. We each need the help of the guidance, wisdom, counsel, criticism, warning, which we may exercise in love on each other's behalf. No one should try to live and think alone or be left by his fellows to live and think alone. That is what the Heidelberg Catechism notes when it defines what is meant by "the communion of saints," namely, "that every one must know

himself bound to employ his gifts readily and cheerfully for the advantage . . . of other members" (L.D. 21, Q. 53).

In that very important expression of our common life — our Synods, we have always recognized this important principle. We have been careful to see to it that no individual initiated action in the life of the Church without due regard for the counsel and criticism of the other members of the body. It is for that reason that we have felt that normally any Church member who wishes to submit an overture to Synod should do so "through channels" — first to Consistory, then to Classis, and thence to Synod. This principle is still recognized in the first part of Rule V-D of the newly adopted rules for Synodical procedure. This rule specifies that among the matters legally before Synod are: "Overtures or communications, which have failed to gain the endorsement of Classis, but which the Consistory or individual sponsoring the same desires to submit for Synod's consideration." This rule clearly implies that no consistory should send an overture to Synod without submitting it first to the scrutiny and judgment of Classis; and no individual church member should send an overture to Synod without submitting it first to the scrutiny and judgment of Consistory and Classis.

Some people, unfortunately, tend to think of this required procedure as a "red-tape" technicality. It is not. It is an application of the principle of the communion of saints. And as a rule for Synodical procedure it is both necessary and salutary. No individual church member should regard himself as so sufficient unto himself that he may ignore and by-pass Consistory and Classis and address himself directly to Synod. He needs the help and judgment of his fellow-members in Consistory and Classis, and should invite their judgment upon his thinking and upon the action he proposes. If he does so, one of three salutary things may result: (1) If that which he proposes is approved, it will be strengthened by the larger and confirmatory judgment of Consistory and Classis, and it will be commended as something which can with more confident assurance be submitted to Synod. (2) On the other hand, he may be persuaded by the larger judgment of Consistory and Classis of the faultiness of his proposal and decide to drop it — which will save him the embarrassment of submitting and

save Synod the trouble of dealing with an overture that is faulty. (3) If, however, he disagrees with the disappointing judgment of both Consistory and Classis, he may still submit his overture to Synod, as Rule V-D correctly allows — for Consistory and Classis are not set up as "road-blocks" in a hierarchical system. But then he will be submitting his overture with such conviction as a minority ought to possess — a conviction that still stands strong after it has been tested in the communion of the saints by such agencies as Christ has established for the sound and ordered life of the Church.

But now there comes this little addition to Rule V-D, "Likewise overtures, or communications from individual members, regarding matters of common interest as referred to in Article 30, Church Order," are matters legally before Synod. This makes rule V-D of the newly adopted rules for Synodical procedure double-tongued. And because it is that it is unscriptural. For this is what Rule V-D in its two parts now says: If you wish, you may submit an overture to Synod through the channels of Consistory and Classis. However, if you don't want to do it that way, you can ignore Consistory and Classis and submit it directly. We allow both. Take your choice. Both are OK. Or, to put it in terms of its essence: When you submit an overture to Synod, you can, if you wish, take account of the principle of the communion of saints, and put it first to the scrutiny of Consistory and Classis. Or, if you prefer, you can ignore the principle of the communion of saints, by-pass the scrutiny and judgment of Consistory and Classis, and submit your overture to Synod as an individualist.

It hardly need be said that Scripture offers no such alternative. The Bible teaches that we are "severally members one of another" (Rom. 12:5), and that it is not permitted to us *at any point* of our thinking or acting to say: "I have no need of thee" (I Cor. 12:21). This new rule, this foreign intruder, is unscriptural, because it allows in the sphere of official ecclesiastical action the ignoring of the official agencies which Christ has given for the exercise of the communion of the saints in the official life of the Church.

For Decency and Good Order — Continued

Article 30, Church Order

FROM the wording of the addition to the rules here held in question, it appears that support for this new rule is found in Article 30 of the Church Order. This article reads, in the part relevant to the question: "In major assemblies only such matters shall be dealt with as could not be finished in minor assemblies, *or such as pertain to the churches of the major assembly in common.*" The latter part of this statement, which I have put in italics, is apparently the warrant which allows individuals to send overtures directly to Synod.

We need at this point to determine just what Article 30 of the Church Order says. The part quoted is obviously concerned only with *such matters* as shall be dealt with at Synod. The matters with which Synod may deal are of two kinds: (1) Those matters which "could not be finished in minor assemblies." The reference is to protests and appeals — since these are the only matters which might be "finished" in minor assemblies but for some intervening reason cannot be, so that they are finally referred to the highest body of appeal. (2) Those matters which do not refer merely to a local church or church group, but "pertain to the churches of the major assembly in common" (e.g., doctrinal pronouncements, administration of denominational projects such as College, Seminary, Missions, etc.).

Thus, Article 30 concerns itself only with *such matters* as may be dealt with in the major assembly. But that is all. It certainly does not speak of *two kinds of approach* to Synod — one "through channels," and the other directly from any individual or consistory in the Church. If the latter is read out of it, it is read out of it only by questionable deduction. It is often reasoned, for example, that since the individual church member is a member not only of the local church or classis but also of the denomination, he may therefore, as a member of the denomination, directly address himself to Synod on matters of common, i.e., denominational interest. This is a wholly unwarranted deduction, because it ignores the fact that even as a denomination arises and exists through the conjoining of churches into Classes and of Classes into a Synod,

so too the movement of her life must be through congregation and Classis to Synod. The assumption that a church member may operate directly with Synod gives to Synod an independent importance which does not belong to it, and leads in the direction of what may be called "Synodocracy." Secondly, the assumption that because the individual church member is a member of the denomination he may therefore address Synod directly on matters of denominational interest, ignores, as has been indicated above, the important principle of the communion of saints, for whose expression in official matters Christ has made provision in the established agencies of the Church.

Article 30 of the Church Order rather opposes the rule than supports it. If we interpret broadly the phrase "such matters . . . as could not be finished in the minor assemblies," it may be taken to refer not only to protests and appeals but also overtures intended for address to Synod. Some of these — because irrelevant, without proper grounds, not in proper form, or patently not conducive to the common interest — ought to be "finished" (i.e., refuted and discouraged) in Consistory and Classis so that they don't come to confuse and add to the burdens of Synod. Happily, many overtures intended for Synod are effectively "finished" in minor assemblies. It would be better if others were — and it is a rather disconcerting thing to observe that Synod, by its new rule, is now making itself a free target for any address to come, without benefit of Consistorial or Classical testing, from any of the 97,235 individual members of the denomination. This may seem democratic, and a noble effort at securing the rights of the individual believer. It is in fact the expression of a fairly radical notion of ecclesiastical democracy; and rather than securing the individual believer in his rights, it invites him to the exercise of individualistic license.

To What End?

TO what end, it may be asked, does Synod now open the way for individual members to address "overtures, or communications" directly to Synod, if they wish? What purpose can it serve?

Synod is a deliberative assembly, we are told, and as such it is called upon to render judgments and make decisions that are of utmost consequence to the Church. Overtures and communications addressed to Synod should be calculated to help Synod to a reasoned, judicious, Word-governed, and Spirit-led deliberation upon matters of concern to the Church at large.

But this new rule — which makes individual address of overtures direct to Synod part of standard procedure — will not help Synod to such deliberation. Overtures submitted through Consistories and Classes will help Synod to reasoned deliberation — since they are overtures resting on the judgment not only of an individual but on the broad judgment of lower deliberative assemblies.

I greatly fear that the new rule is a reflection of an unhealthy and foreign element that of late years has been creeping into our church theory and practice. The foreign element is the increasingly intruding notion of "popular sovereignty." It has arisen particularly in connection with our denominational school, and comes to expression in the statement that our School is the "School of the people." It is not. It is the *School of the Church* — the Church conceived not on the Congregationalist principle, but the Church with governing offices and assemblies instituted by Christ, the Church's Head. As Christ rules His Church through Consistory and Classis and Synod, and through the sum-total of individual members who make up a denomination.

The new rule, however — which allows the by-passing of the offices of the church and the lower assemblies — is a virtual invitation to the exercise of popular sovereignty in the life of the denomination. And the overtures, petitions, and other communications addressed to Synod by individual members become the "voice of the people" — something like the letters and telegrams we are sometimes urged to send to our congressmen to exert pressure for or against a proposed legislative enactment.

It is an unhappy circumstance to consider that the highest deliberative assembly in the Church of God should become a place for the exercise of "pressures." Human nature — even

the Church of Christ — being what it is, we shall have to reckon with the partial intrusion of such evils. But they are to be discouraged, not encouraged and licensed. In recent years Synod has been the recipient of numerous petitions from individual church members. They were not always carefully reasoned documents setting forth judgments which would otherwise be unknown to Synod. They were often mere expressions of the “voice of the people” — popular pressures intruding into the highest deliberative assembly of the house of God.

We fully believe that most of our people are concerned to conduct themselves in Synodical matters with due regard for that decency and order in the Church of God to which Paul exhorts. But we ought not to tempt them to such individualistic exercise as we now do by making it a matter of standard procedure for every individual member to send “overtures, or communications” directly to Synod if he chooses. Nor ought we to throw this door wide open to those who may have a tendency to abuse and to encourage others to abuse this license by making of it a pressure device. We ought rather to emphasize anew that both the principle of the communion of saints and the offices and government instituted in the Church require that also in matters of “common interest,” every member must exercise his functions as a believer through the established organs and agencies of the Church. This is best for the individual himself, who suffers if he lives and acts without regard to the communion of believers of which he is a member. And it is the best way to secure the promotion of our common interests as a denomination. We need each other and should act in communion with each other. We should not yield to the temptation to think and act apart from each other, and in consequence, perhaps, *against* each other.

Rights of the Individual

DOES this mean the submerging of the individual believer in the body, and his suppression by the body?

Assuredly not! There is nothing either in the Biblical concept of communion, or in the Reformed conception of church polity that does despite to the individual. Without in any sense cur-

tailoring his rights and privileges, the principle of communion and our conception of church polity safeguard his best interests. For in each instance, the believer is encouraged to retain his individuality, but to exercise it always with regard to and in the salutary fellowship of the body.

As before indicated, Consistory and Classis are not road-blocks in a hierarchical system. They are the instituted organs of the church's life. And any member of the church has a perfect right to address an overture or communication to any church body — including the highest body, Synod. No lower body can prevent him from doing so or has even the slightest will to prevent him. Our lower church bodies exist for the sake of the individual as well as for the sake of the church at large. And when an individual member sends an overture through Consistory and Classis, these bodies help him — sometimes by concurring, sometimes by disagreeing. But in no instance is an individual ever prevented by any lower body from ultimately addressing himself to Synod. Nor should we ever wish that a minority not in agreement with Consistory and Classis should ever be so prevented. Minorities are indispensable to the health of the church and often the initiators of highly needed reformation and change. Some of the most fruitful overtures have been those which a minority member has sent to Synod without the agreement of Consistory or Classis. And part of the strength of those overtures was the fact that they stood on conviction tested by the disagreements of those bodies.

* * *

THERE are times when an individual member feels that he should address a communication directly to Synod because it is no longer possible to present it to Consistory and Classis. Synod has already allowed, and rightly so, that this may be done — though Synod reserves to itself the right to decide whether or not the matter is of such a nature that Synod should act upon it. This position — balanced, sane, and considerate both of the rights of the individual and of the well-being of the church — was adopted in 1936. It is so much in point here that I should like to quote liberally from the statement of the Synod of 1936 (cf. *Acts* 1936, pp. 91, 92).

In connection with “Communications addressed by individuals to Synod,” the Synod of 1936 asked the Advisory Committee on Church Order to answer the following question:

“How shall a member of our Church present a communication to Synod when he has neglected or been unable first to present his communication to his Consistory and Classis?”

In its answer the Advisory Committee recommended, and Synod adopted the following:

1. *Synod declares that this mandate proceeds on the correct assumption that a member of the church has the right to overture Synod, subject to synodical regulations, that is, that the communication should first be presented for adoption to Consistory and Classis.*

2. *In regard to the question how a member of our Church shall present a communication to Synod when he has neglected to present his communication to his Consistory and Classis, (Synod decides to answer) that such a communication cannot be received.*

3. *In regard to the question how a member of our Church shall present a communication to Synod when he has been unable first to present it to his Consistory and Classis, (Synod decides to answer) that such a communication be received as information, provided that the Stated Clerk of Synod receive evidence that it was impossible for the communicant to present his matter to Consistory and Classis. Synod shall decide for itself whether it shall act upon such matters received for information.*

* * *

IT seems that Synod made a bad exchange when this wholly correct and consistent position of 1936 was dropped in favor of the highly questionable position taken by the Synod of 1952 — allowing as acceptable without further question “overtures, or communications from individual members, regarding matters of common interest.”

If the latter was an attempt to clear the way of *technicalities*, it resulted rather in the sacrifice of *principles*. It is to be hoped that we will abandon this new rule and return to the Scriptural conception of Church communion and of Church government which came to expression in the decision of 1936.

Towards Better Understanding

By HENRY STOB

To the Editorial Committee of
The Reformed Fellowship:

IN September of 1952 I wrote a *Note to a College Freshman*. I expected no comment on it — good or bad. It was a little thing, occupying scarcely a page and a half in this *Journal*. And it was a simple thing, expressing a commonplace idea. It had passed, I thought, like most transient pieces into oblivion.

But in February of this year, five months after its publication, you wrote in the *Torch and Trumpet* a *Note to a Seminary Professor* recalling my piece. It was a long note, like a letter. It was a public note, like an Open Letter. And it was critical of what I had written to the Freshman. This is my reply.

* * *

ANALYSIS reveals that you are occupied in your Letter with two related but distinguishable things. The first, and most obvious, is my *Note*. The second, and most important, is my Philosophy.

Though they are related, these two are not the same. The *Note* is a Writing; the Philosophy is a View of things. The *Note* is a single utterance; the Philosophy, in its articulated form, is the sum of many utterances. The *Note* is a surface Expression; the Philosophy is an underlying Creed.

There is some evidence in your Letter that you recognize this difference and that you wish to honor it. There is some evidence that you wish to distinguish between my particular and transient *Note* and my general and enduring Philosophy. There is some indication that you wish to attack my Writing and not my Creed. "We hope," you say, "that our readers will not interpret our discussion as an attack on Dr. Stob's orthodoxy. We are simply debating the merits of one piece of writing in which Dr. Stob has given what we regard as a very faulty presentation of a highly important matter." Elsewhere you put rhetorical questions which enforce this statement of limited intent. "Does not such writing call for . . . ?" you ask. "Why then is the argument not constructed so that . . . ?" It would appear from

this that the Reformed character of my philosophy is not at issue. It would appear that the only thing you are concerned to challenge is the adequacy of my Expression.

Yet one need not go very far into your Letter to discover that the *phrasing* of my *Note* is not your chief concern. Your main complaint is against my Views. You wish to "debate" with me. It is not questions of terminology and structure that you wish to debate. It is not the limitations of my composition that offend you. You hold "high respect" for me as a writer. You believe that in my *Note* I "have set up a line of thought that is fairly clear and definitive, even though briefly done." What offends you is my ideas. You think there is a "basic difference of opinion" that divides us. It is "matters of principle" that you wish to debate with me. You are "jealous for the accuracy" of my "opinions" and feel yourself under solemn compulsion to "take issue" with them. As against the views I hold you wish to present "a sounder point of view in Christian higher education."

This leaves me in something of a quandary. It leaves me wondering what complaint it is I am expected to reply to. I am puzzled to know whether you wish to acknowledge or to dispute the structural adequacy of my *Note*; whether you wish to affirm or deny the basic soundness of my philosophy. In two statements of intent you say two different things. You say that my writing is inept, and yet that it is definitive. You say that I am orthodox, but indicate that I am on the wrong side of the most important question facing the Church today. You suggest that I am guilty of misstating the sound conceptions I possess, and — that my conceptions are unsound. You suggest that my *Note* is a misleading presentation of the Truth I own, and that, on the contrary, it is a clear account of a basic Error I embrace.

This circumstance compels me to do not merely the one thing that might otherwise be required. It compels me to do two things. It compels me to exegete my *Note*, and also to state once more the basic elements in my View of education. I shall try in what follows to do both as plainly as I can.

It will be done, of course, against the background of your expressed critique.

* * *

FIRST, then, my View of education:

1. I hold that the natural man has not the Mind of Christ (cf. I Cor. 2), and that between the natural man and the Christian there exists a basic and inexpugnable *antithesis* that divides them at the root, and separates them into two fundamentally incompatible, radically different, and mutually hostile kingdoms, the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of the World.

2. I hold that entrance into God's Kingdom is solely by a miracle of *grace*, and that it is effected by a Divine regenerative act in the twinkling of an eye, without our will or knowledge, and apart from education, in accordance with the redemptive love of God revealed in Jesus Christ.

3. I hold that a person, of whatever age or education, upon whom this miracle of grace has been performed, is Christ's, and that he has in principle the *Mind of Christ*; that he has this mind in a moral and religious, not in a metaphysical sense involving identity with God; and that this mind is both a gift conferred and an ideal to be attained, according to the Apostle's teaching: "So then, my beloved, . . . work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who worketh in you both to will and to work. . ."

4. I hold that the believer stands in a *covenantal* relationship to God, in accordance with which both he and his children are "received unto grace in Christ," God the Father in Holy Baptism witnessing and sealing unto them that He adopts them "for His children and heirs."

5. I hold that Calvin College was founded and now exists to educate *these covenant children* and so to establish them in their commitment to the Christ.

6. I hold that education is a *process* in which the student's potentialities are progressively actualized, a process in which a student increasingly becomes what he essentially is; and that, accordingly, the aim of all instruction at Calvin is to bring to fullest flower the Mind of Christ which the student

both in principle possesses and through God's sanctifying Spirit must achieve.

7. I hold that the process of education in a Christian college must be *governed from start to finish* by Christian principles; that all things must be seen and known with and by the Mind of Christ; and that neither teacher nor student, in giving or receiving instruction, may ever at any juncture betray this Mind by forsaking the Christian foundations upon which by grace they are established.

8. I hold that the process of education and sanctification is *never complete*, and that since sin remains in us until we die, the new heart is never in *actuality* the sole determinant of our thought and action.

9. I hold that God, through his general revelation, the general witness of his Spirit, and the restraining influences of his common grace, enables the non-Christian to discover and disclose *facts* and complexes of fact which the Christian may and must use as constitutive elements in a Christian science of reality.

10. I hold that the Christian educator, in his effort to fashion the student's mind, must utilize the materials provided by *both special and general* revelation; and that the Christian student should be formed and informed not only by the Word and Spirit, but also by the funded wisdom and experience of the race, the two operating always in indissoluble *union*, a union in which the Word is the sovereign norm and corrective.

11. I hold that Christian education, in the process of forming in the Christian student the Christian mind he already in principle possesses, does not destroy but redeems his manhood and, by making him a man in Christ, *humanizes* him as no non-Christian education can.

12. I hold that Christian education must be both education and Christian. To be *Christian* it must be based upon the Christ and be in its whole extent pervaded by his Spirit. To be *education* it must fashion a student into a whole man completely furnished unto every good work.

These principles, endorsed by Reformed people everywhere, have governed whatever I have written on Christian education. They governed the Addresses to which you make favorable reference. They governed no less my *Note* to a college freshman. It was squarely upon the basis formed by

them that the *Note* was laid. This you might have known. Of this you could have reassured yourself had you undertaken to make inquiry of me.

* * *

MY *Note* was addressed to a Freshman — to a Christian freshman on his way into a Christian college. It was concerned with education — with the process of forming and shaping students. And it focussed attention on the entity which undergoes the educational process — the Self, or Mind.

Since "Mind" is prominent in the *Note*, and the subject of some misunderstanding, I perhaps should indicate again how I employ the term. I employ it to designate that which lies neither on the surface nor on the deepest level of our being.

On the surface of our being lies our bodies, our feelings, our manners, and our overt judgments. At the root of our being lies our Heart. Neither the one nor the other of these do I consider the proper object of educational forming. An education concerned merely to *modify* the surface aspects of our life — to give health to our bodies, dexterity to our hands, form to our manners, precision to our speech — would be a shallow and spurious education. An education concerned to *modify* the root of our being — to alter, form, and shape the Heart — would be an impious and impossible undertaking.

The direct or proper "object" of education is the mind. It lies, not indeed on the deepest, but yet on the deeper level of our existence. Itself subject to the direction of the Heart, it, in its turn, directs our judgments and volitions. Less basic than the heart, from which it derives its fundamental cast and direction, it is fuller and more basic than the Intellect; since intellect, will, and feeling are included in it.

I find you representing me as using the term Mind "very much as the Bible uses the term heart," and, what is even more strange, commending me for such usage. I don't use Mind as a synonym for Heart. Mind and Heart are, in my judgment, two distinct things, which ought not to be confused.

The Heart is the religious ground of our being; it lies below the threshold of our consciousness; it functions on a transcendental level of our existence; it cannot be altered by an activity of man, and it undergoes no process of

development as such; it cannot be educated; when changed it is changed in an instant through the miracle of regeneration; it determines but is not determined by our choice and decisions. — About the Heart no man may say what I quite rightly said about the freshman's Mind — that it is the product of many historical forces and influences, that he has been an agent in the making of it, that he must expose it to the formative influences that a college is meant to generate and release.

The mind, unlike the heart, can be altered or improved by taking care. The mind is, as I told the freshman, the *actual You*, in distinction from what you are in principle and promise. It is you in your concrete existence. It is you in your empirical totality. It is you with all your modifiable thoughts, imaginings, attitudes, and desires. It is you as you stand in history, affecting and being affected by the various influences that operate there. It is the variable size and measure of you. It is you where you centrally confront the world. It is the conscious center of you. It is you as you reveal yourself in specific judgments, evaluations, choices. It is what you now or at any time *concretely are*. It is you as educable, alterable, sanctifiable. It is you as made and still unmade, as being and still becoming. It is quite simply You, in your full concrete actuality, and including all your contradictions and consistencies.

The distinction between Mind and Heart may be seen in the relations they sustain to one another.

The heart, regenerate or apostate, gives the mind its basic "set," but it does not, in this life, completely control the mind. The unregenerate heart, because of common grace, does not come to full expression in the unbeliever's mind. The regenerate heart, because of sin, does not come to full expression in the Christian's mind.

There is an unqualified and absolute antithesis between the regenerate and unregenerate heart; they are related as life to death, as white to black. There is not an absolute antithesis between the Christian and the non-Christian "mind." He who is in his heart a Christian, in principle Christ's, may have a mind that embraces egregious error and breathes a reprehensible spirit. He who is in his heart a non-Christian, in principle Satan's, may have a mind that embraces much of truth and breathes a temperate spirit. In the case of both the Christian and

Towards Better Understanding — Continued

non-Christian, the mind, though for different reasons, can be false to the heart.

To avoid all misunderstanding a terminological remark must here be appended. The Christian, whose heart is regenerated by God's Spirit, may be said to have a Christian mind — in principle. He who has a new heart has a new mind — in germ. Sometimes in speech and writing these qualifications are dropped, and we speak of any and all Christians as having a Christian mind. There is no objection to this, provided we remember the elliptical nature of the expression. I myself have used such expressions both in my *Note* and in the twelve-point credo that I set down above. When the expression is used in this way, however, one is compelled to atone for the ellipsis by speaking in paradox. One is compelled to say that the Christian both has and has not the Mind of Christ. In speaking of the heart one may not use an expression of this kind. One may never say that a Christian both has and has not a new heart.

* * *

MY note, as I said, was written to a Christian student, the only kind of student a Reformed teacher writing in a Reformed journal circulating in a Reformed community could expect to reach or would care to contemplate.

The note concerned the student's education. He had just come to college — to Calvin College. I commended him for this. His choice of schools, I thought, was excellent.

He might have gone to some technical school of secular vintage. I should have regretted that, for technical schools do not educate. They train, they develop skills and techniques, but they do not reach the deeper levels of the student's life. They do not form the mind.

The student might have gone to a secular college of liberal arts. This would have been better, for a college of this kind does educate. It confronts the student, if it is a college of the better sort, with the best that has been thought and said, lifts him out of his narrow conceits, and exposes him to universal knowledge. Had the student applied himself he might have acquired there a broad and disciplined mind. Even so I should have regretted his

going, for a secular college does not ordinarily help a student to acquire a Christian mind.

It is only at a Christian college that a systematic effort is made to form in the student a Christian mind. And what other mind would a Christian student want? A Christian student, as I reminded the freshman, wants "to shape his mind after the best and most enduring pattern that exists." He wants to acquire the ideal mind. But there is only one way of acquiring that — by being shaped through "the Word and Spirit and the whole of God's creation into conformity with the Mind of Christ," by being "fashioned anew in the image and likeness of God." It is this kind of forming, this kind of education, that a Christian college, and only a Christian college, undertakes to do.

But it requires doing. The college has to work on the student — and hard. One of the first things it has to teach him is that there is no room in the Christian mind for sophistry. You cannot ever have a Christian mind if, like the ancient sophists, you lock yourself up in your own little world and indulge your private fancies. Some Christians do that to an alarming degree. We all do that, I fear, more frequently than we should. We "set up our private opinion as the standard of truth and allow whim and impulse to determine action." This is reprehensible. It is the mark of an uneducated man. It is the mark of a frail and immature Christian.

The Christian student must get beyond, transcend his private self. He must enlarge his perspectives. He must become a Man. He must become a man because he is one. Each one of us is "more than this or that particular individual strictly as such; we are human beings, sharing with our fellows a common nature (in virtue of which we bear the common name, Man), and residing with them under an objective and universally binding law of righteousness and truth." Even Plato saw this. He saw that man was bigger than the Sophists supposed, and he urged each in his generation and in every generation since, to be a Man rather than an isolated self, to be human rather than merely individual, to acquire a universal rather than a private mind. And he was right.

This doesn't mean that we must have Plato's mind. Plato's mind was a mind inseparable from and affected by Plato's apostate heart, and thus quite incapable of adoption by a Christian. But we can and must adopt Plato's suggestion that the narrow mind of the Sophists "be replaced by that broader mind which lifts us out of our privacy and identifies us with mankind."

We are already identified with mankind, for we are men, but we must enter into our heritage. The Christian college seeks to lead the Christian student into that heritage by acquainting him with those laws — of logic, mathematics, and the like — which hold and operate for every man, and by pouring into him the knowledge concerning the cosmos which the human race has through millenniums acquired and stored up, and which is the common property of all educated men.

There is no one who has better title to that knowledge than the Christian. It is his by right. The non-Christian has this knowledge, combined with much that is false, but not by a law of right. It is borrowed or poached, poached from the Christian universe whose Christian character he is concerned to deny but cannot destroy. Were he correct in his assumption that God is not, or that God is not sovereign, there would be no knowledge at all, least of all for him. But he is not correct in his assumption, and there is knowledge, also for him. In God's great goodness to his people he so directs affairs that unbelieving men, wicked men, are found pouring treasures of knowledge into a coffer, accessible to all, but really owned by Christians only.

I told the freshman to raid that coffer and thus "enlarge the cramped perspective of his cabined self," become "kin to the large minded men who have created our art and science," and attain "in some measure to the dignity and freedom of disciplined man."

But I had more to tell him. He was not to forget that he was a Christian. He was not to spend his time at college becoming Human merely; he was to become Christian Man. It was not that he should become human first and then Christian. That would be preposterous. He couldn't manage that in any case; and no Christian, certainly no Reformed Christian, could possibly propose it. The student should be doing both at once. He should be growing as man and Christian simul-

aneously — as Christian man. His appropriation and assimilation of knowledge should be Christian assimilation, an assimilation in which facts are shorn of the spurious interpretation put upon them by the non-Christian, and set in a framework differing at the root from that employed by those who are not in Christ. The knowledge and experience he acquires should go to form a Christian mind, a mind governed in all its range by the new heart born of grace. Without that mind, I said, "no man is educated, just as without it no man is saved."

It is possible to look at the world through the narrow aperture of the isolated self, and to find a little bit of truth; the Sophists are there to prove it. It is possible also to look at the world through the broader mind of man, and to see more truth; Plato is there to prove it. But it is only as one is in Christ and it is only in the measure that one looks at the world through the mind his Spirit gives that one attains the whole and steady look and sees things as they truly are. "To understand ourselves, to understand the world, to truly and fundamentally understand anything at all, we must take up position neither in the individual nor in the race, neither in Sophistic intelligence nor in human rationality, but in the Truth himself, which is what is meant by taking on the mind of Christ."

This is what I said in my *Note to a College Freshman*. This is what you could have read in it. This is what I could have told you had you asked me about its meaning.

I SHALL not comment on those several features of your Letter which you yourself, I have no doubt, will in due time judge adversely. I shall merely make two brief remarks in closing. The first concerns my personal reaction to your letter. The second concerns a judgment you make about the Church.

During the Japanese war, when our troops had constantly to guard against the infiltration of their lines by a cunning and stealthy foe, it sometimes happened that a soldier standing watch could fire on a fellow-guardsmen. Hearing a rustling or a stirring close at hand he would, in his eagerness to protect the line, shoot before he had the right man in his sights. It was

not that he was more sensitive than others to the signs of enemy action or more concerned to protect the encampment. He was only less careful, or perhaps more afraid, or perhaps more eager to make good; or perhaps he was new to the line. In any case, his finger sat heavy to the trigger and sometimes, in his zeal to kill an enemy, he would wound a friend who stood with him on guard. I feel that something like this happened when you published your *Note to a Seminary Professor*.

The other thing I wish to comment on is a statement that you make in your Table of Contents. You there announce that you are offering reply to me "hoping to make clear the significance of a basic difference of opinion in the current Reformed Community." Apart from the fact that this places me, in your opinion, on the other side of what you elsewhere call the most important question confronting us today, it makes a judgment about the Church which I should be most reluctant to endorse, and which is divisive in effect even though it be not this in intent.

That there exists a "basic difference" is not a premise from which a discussion can proceed. It is only a base from which an attack can be launched. Between people divided by a "basic difference" there can be no compromise; there can be only reaffirmation or surrender. Basic differences are very deep; they cut into the foundations. They call for controversy, polemics, battle. They exclude discussion.

But it is only by discussion that basic differences, if they exist, can be brought to light. Discussion, however, assumes common ground, a common definition of the truth. And every member of the Church is under the most solemn obligation to assume that every other member stands with him on the one foundation that is laid, until by patient trial it becomes evident that it is not so.

What is required in the Church, therefore, is not controversy but conversation, a speaking from "faith to faith" by brothers in a common house. By this the spirit of men will be revealed. Should any be revealed to be not of Christ, the keys are there to be responsibly employed by the servants of God to whom they have been entrusted. But until then we must count ourselves members together of one body, joined in one fellowship with our Lord Jesus Christ.

If there is therefore any exhortation in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any tender mercies and compassions, make full my joy, that ye be of the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind; doing nothing through faction or through vainglory, but in lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself; not looking each of you to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others. Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.

LETTERS TO THE JOURNAL

On Junior Colleges

Editorial Board of
The Reformed Journal
Dear Dr. Zylstra:

You have convinced me that we need Junior Colleges. This is how you did it. On page 13 of the February *Journal*, you write concerning an aspect of the Junior College Issue: "It is an issue which deserves independent and fulsome treatment." The dictionary states that in modern usage *fulsome* means: "offensive to moral or aesthetic sensibility or to the sense of propriety; repulsive; disgusting, especially, offensive from insincerity or baseness of motive; as *fulsome* praise."

Professor, did you employ the wrong word or is that the kind of treatment the issue deserves? Of course, the latter is excluded. But Professor, that is why we need Junior Colleges.

Sincerely,
(Rev.) Herman Minnema
Worthington, Minnesota
March 24, 1953

Mr. Minnema is right about the modern meaning of *fulsome*. It is also listed (F & W) as: *full, fat, satisfied*. I used the word in its original sense of *full, full-bodied*. Compare Golding's translation of Calvin's version of Psalm lxxiii. 26: "Much more fulsome is David's confession" — H.Z.

(Letters continued next page)

Letters to the Journal — Continued

The Reformed Journal
Dear Dr. Zylstra:

I should be very grateful if you would permit me to voice just a few comments concerning the Junior College-educational question. I am sure that all the *Journal* readers enjoyed your penetrating, yet sympathetic analysis of the various letters received.

The articles which you have been writing, especially the one entitled, "Are Junior Colleges the Solution," have been beautiful expressions of a truly basic and educationally sound nature. The ideal or standard of a philosophically orientated college curriculum is, without a doubt, the desire of a vast majority of our people who fully understand the demands of Christian higher education. However, I cannot help but feel that such a rationale, and the concomitant organization of our educational system, will not quickly become a reality because of the presence of several factors and trends. It is mainly these that I should like to discuss.

In the first place, we have seen, within the last decade, a tremendous reawakening among the people of our denomination and kindred churches concerning the opportunities and requirements implicit in the commission to train our children "in the fear of the Lord." There have been various agencies which have made notable contributions to the dissemination of Christian educational principles. Foremost among these has been the systematic work of the National Union of Christian Schools. This development has necessitated expansion, which in turn stimulated further interest. As a result, we are witnessing a host of young eager minds which is anxious to storm the heights of higher education.

In the second place, every Christian teacher must impress Christian ideals upon the minds of those who sit before him. Very simply stated, there are three which have been taught in our schools for many years: *to think*, *to know*, and *to serve*. It is the presence of this third imperative with all of its demanding ramifications which may

force us to compromise in the practical expression of a neat, precise, theoretical rationale. I too shy away from making *needs* and *service* normative in education. I too realize that, "The highly trained mind must be a prerequisite of all leadership" (John Garrett, "Do American Schools Educate?", *The Atlantic*, February, 1953, p. 70). But you see, when the Chinese Reds break through the lines on Old Baldy, everyone grabs a gun, not just those specially trained. Perhaps we are facing a major "break-through" when we scan the teacher-add page of the *Banner*, or when we consider the crying need for clergy and lay workers for our expanding home mission and foreign fields. Christian education, especially higher education, should be at its best something very exclusive, not inclusive. But Calvin has already surrendered some of its exclusiveness and the Junior College may abet this process. Compromises may have to be made somewhere, and we had better make our choices wise ones.

Perhaps the crucial question is this: *can* ideals be compromised? If so, will they be sufficiently flexible to allow for these periods of crisis? Can we reduce the slack at a later day? Can Junior Colleges aid us? Would such constitute a capitulation to disaster, an accommodation to failure?

There is another facet which is not wholly unrelated to the preceding. Many of our high school staffs have been conscious for some time of the dangers involved in the various levelling forces on the American educational scene. They have made determined efforts to provide for individual differences by separating them into limited numbers of courses, e.g., commercial, general, and college preparatory. Some staffs even determined to specify that all college preparatory students must have two major fields of work and two minor fields with prescribed subjects in each field. However, they met with some difficulty because students soon discovered that the Calvin College entrance requirements were very lenient, and classmates who did not participate

in the prescribed preparatory work were admitted just as freely as were those who had. Hence it became very difficult to maintain such a program with any degree of consistency and exactness. Perhaps a wholesome incentive for further tightening of the curriculum requirements for those preparing for college would be an initial move from Calvin itself.

Finally, unless I misunderstand you, I find that I cannot fully accept your thesis concerning the "Community Scholars" as being a *sine qua non* of higher education. Education is much too individual a matter to require of a college to maintain a fairly large community of scholars in constant and harmonious reciprocal relation before that college can properly meet its task. "... Let us make no bones about it, men not walls make a city, and a school is as good as its staff. Recruitment of men and women of ability and virtue . . . is the consideration which must perforce override all others . . ." (*Ibid.*, p. 72). You yourself present an encomium to the education of our forefathers in *A Tree of Life* but they often were tutored under the hand of one man. Was Rietdyk playing wimp to disaster or acquiescing to failure when he sought and received his basic college and seminary training in toto from Rev. Vander Werp? I am definitely puzzled but still unshaken in my belief that a Junior College staff of six philosophically orientated men who have rather thorough command of the rationale of their field and the relation of that field to other arts and sciences would be able to inform young minds with a type of Christian education which would not be drastically inferior either to that work now accomplished at Calvin or to the work desired and demanded by our original ideal educational commitment.

And that, in the light of the facts and trends which I have mentioned, may be the compromise which the church and people must face.
March 30, 1953

Very sincerely,
Peter P. De Boer,
Sioux Center, Iowa